

rolled by the old Embassy, he told me that it was his dad that cut the ribbon as the Ambassador from the United States to Afghanistan. And here we are about to open a brand new Embassy with a proud son and a great representative of our country, Ambassador Ron Neumann, cutting the ribbon.

History sometimes spins an interesting tale, doesn't it, and such a tale is being spun today of public service. I want to thank all of my fellow citizens for working so far away from home on an incredibly important mission. I want to thank the Embassy personnel, as well as our United States military personnel for being on the frontline of freedom's march. I know it's a hard job, away from your families—a long way from your families, having just flown 17 hours to get here.

But it's a vital mission. It's historic in its nature. This is the kind of mission that someday, the Secretary of State will be speaking to Foreign Service officers and relaying the stories and the tales and the toils of those who served in Afghanistan in 2006. And so I congratulate you on your hard work, and I thank you on behalf of a grateful nation.

I also want to thank the Foreign Service nationals who are here as well, those citizens of Afghanistan who are helping our folks to accomplish a big mission. I am struck by the story that our Embassy was kept open and guarded during the days of the Taliban. And when Afghanistan was liberated, there were Afghan nationals here to turn over the keys to the Embassy. For those of you who are guarding our Embassy, thank you. For those of you who carry on their legacy, I thank you as well. We welcome your help; we're honored with your presence today.

I've been honored to welcome Afghan citizens to Washington on a fairly regular basis. Laura and I have hosted brave men and women, who are dedicated to democracy and freedom, in Washington. One thing they always ask me—they ask me with their words, and they ask me with their stares, as they look into my eyes—is the United States firmly committed to the future of Afghanistan? That's what they want to know. My answer is, "Absolutely." It's in our Nation's interest that Afghanistan develop into a democracy. It's in the interests of the United States of America for there to be examples around the

world of what is possible. That it's possible to replace tyrants with a free society in which men and women are respected, in which young girls can go to school to realize their full potential, in which people are able to realize their dreams.

And so my message to the people of Afghanistan is, take a look at this building. It's a big, solid, permanent structure, which should represent the commitment of the United States of America to your liberty. I firmly believe the work that we're doing together is laying the foundation of peace for generations to come. And I want to thank you for sharing that mission.

May God bless America and you and your families, and may God's blessings rain on the good people of Afghanistan.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:31 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

Remarks to United States and Coalition Troops at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan *March 1, 2006*

Thanks for having us. Laura and I are honored to be here in Afghanistan with you. It's a real pleasure to be with our country's finest citizens. I want to thank General Eikenberry and General Freakley and all those who are taking responsibility to make sure we complete our mission.

I particularly want to thank the members of the United States Army and Marines and Air Force and Navy who are here. Laura and I thank the civilian contractors who are here. I—really pleased to be with the 10th Mountain Division—"Climb to Glory."

I know it's not easy to be away from home, but I want you to understand that you're on the frontier of freedom, that you're involved with doing two important things: One is finding an enemy and bringing them to justice so they don't hurt our fellow citizens again. That mission requires steadfast determination. The enemy cannot defeat us militarily. The only thing they can do is to kill innocent lives and try to shake our will. But they don't understand the United States of America. We will never be intimidated by thugs and

assassins. We will defeat the enemy and win the war on terror.

And the other thing you're doing is to help this new democracy not only survive but to flourish. Laura and myself and Secretary Condi Rice who is with us here—step on over here. We just met with President Karzai. And my message to the people of Afghanistan is—was the following: One, it takes courage to get rid of a tyrant or tyrannical governments and to recognize that the future belongs to democracy. That's not easy work. It's hard to recognize that people ought to be allowed to worship freely and speak their minds freely after living under the grips of a tyrant.

Our other message was, is that the United States doesn't cut and run. When we make a commitment, we keep our commitments. It's in our national interest that the work you're doing here, the work of helping the Afghans develop a democracy—it's in the interests of your children and your grandchildren. Because, you see, democracies yield the peace we all want. History has taught us democracies don't war. You don't run for office in a democracy and say, "Please vote for me; I promise you war." [*Laughter*] You run for office in democracies, and say, "Vote for me; I'll represent your interests. Vote for me; I'll help your young girls go to school or the health care you get improved."

Democracies yield peace, and that's what we want. What's going to happen in Afghanistan is, a neighborhood that has been desperate for light instead of darkness is going to see what's possible when freedom arrives. What's going to happen in Afghanistan, it's going to send a signal not only in the neighborhood but around the world, that freedom is the potential. The United States of America believes that freedom is universal. Freedom is not our gift to the world; freedom is the gift from an Almighty to every single person in this world.

I'm proud of our United States military. Many of you volunteered for service after September the 11th, 2001. You saw that our Nation was attacked, and when the country called upon you, you said, let me serve, let me join in the fight to defeat the terrorists so attacks like that will never occur on our

soil again. And that's what you're doing here in Afghanistan. You're helping to change this part of the world—and change the world with your courage and your sacrifice. I assure you that this Government of yours will not blink; we will not yield. We're on the right course, and the world is going to be a better place because of your service.

So we're here to thank you. I want you to e-mail and call your friends, and more important, your families, and tell them the old Commander in Chief showed up for a little bit—with a message of appreciation not only for you but for your loved ones as well. I ask for God's blessings on you and your mission, God's blessings on our country. Thank you for letting us come by.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:37 p.m. in the Clam Shell. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry, USA, commander, Combined Forces Command Afghanistan; Maj. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, USA, commander, 10th Mountain Division and Combined Joint Task Force 76; and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

Remarks Following a Meeting With American and Indian Business Leaders in New Delhi, India

March 2, 2006

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India. Mr. President, distinguished journalists, ladies and gentlemen, I've already welcomed President George Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush on this, their first visit to India. I would now like to welcome the U.S. CEOs who have traveled to India for this historic meeting.

The President and I have just concluded our official discussions, and I'm sure he shares my—[*inaudible*—] executive officers. The establishment of this group last year was an important initiative stated by the President—[*inaudible*—] in which the private sectors of our two countries could interact and build a roadmap for promoting cooperation. I would like to thank the two cochairs, Mr. William Harrison and Mr. Ratan Tata, and their colleagues for the excellent work done in relaying the report which they will now present.